

EIGHTEEN MONTHS AND BEYOND: IMPLICATIONS OF U.S. POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN

Bruce Riedel, Peter Bergen, Frank Anderson, Marc Sageman

The following is an edited transcript of the fifty-ninth in a series of Capitol Hill conferences convened by the Middle East Policy Council. The meeting was held in the Cannon Building on January 7, 2010, with Thomas R. Mattair presiding.

THOMAS MATTAIR: Executive Director, Middle East Policy Council, and associate editor of *Middle East Policy*; author, *Global Security Watch—Iran: A Reference Handbook*

Today, we're here to discuss Afghanistan. Obviously, President Obama has made his decision about the way forward. He made it in a very deliberate way, hearing advice from people whose views differed. Instead of choosing a more narrowly focused counterterrorism strategy, he chose to surge additional forces into Afghanistan and pursue a very ambitious counterinsurgency strategy.

We have people here on the panel who agree with this and people who question it and disagree with it. Certainly there are issues concerning the partners we have to work with in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the terrain and the demography. Another issue, of course, is that we've already lost 1,000 men and women in this war. We've also spent \$250 billion and will probably spend another trillion dollars. But we do need to find a way to protect the American people from the scourge of terrorism.

Bruce Riedel is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Saban Center for Middle East Policy and a former CIA officer. He also served in the Department of Defense and the National Security Council and as a senior adviser to three American presidents on Middle East terrorism, political transition and conflict resolution. At the request of President Obama, he chaired an interagency review last year to consider our policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan. And in addition to this, Bruce is an author whose latest book, *The Search for al-Qaeda* (Brookings, 2008), will soon be out in paperback.

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Frank Anderson, my colleague and the president of the Middle East Policy Council, spent 27 years in the U.S. government working on Middle East issues, many of those

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Marc Sageman is an independent researcher on terrorism, the founder of Sageman Consulting, the director of research at ARTIS and a consultant for RTI International. He has consulted for many branches of our government, foreign governments and the New York Police Department. He holds academic positions at the George Washington University and the University of Maryland. He served in the Central Intelligence Agency from 1984 to 1991, spending 1987-89 in Islamabad running U.S. unilateral programs with the Afghan mujahedeen. Marc is also an author; his last two books are *Understanding Terror Networks* and *Leaderless Jihad*.

BRUCE RIEDEL: Senior Fellow, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution

I've had the privilege of speaking to this forum before, and it's always a great honor to be here, especially in a magnificent room like this.

Let me begin with a disclaimer. Although I was the chairman of the president's strategic review of policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan last winter and spring, he lived up to his commitment to me — it was temporary duty and I was freed at the beginning of April of 2009. Please do not regard my remarks as in any way representing the views of either the president or the U.S. government. I speak only for myself. That said, I would like to summarize for you very briefly the key conclusions of the review that I chaired, particularly on the substance of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and a bit on Pakistan and then spend most of my time talking about the way forward, where we go from here and what we can expect in the months ahead.

Briefly put, President Obama inherited a disaster in Afghanistan. A war that should have been won and finished in 2002 was not. Instead of going after our enemy relentlessly and remorselessly, we lost our attention and drifted off to the Mesopotamian Valley. The consequence was that our enemy was allowed to regroup and recover.

The Afghan state that we tried to rebuild was gravely handicapped from the beginning. Al-Qaeda was able to reestablish a safe haven, a sanctuary along the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan itself, a country of 170 million people, with the fastest-growing nuclear arsenal in the world, became increasingly and significantly destabilized by the spillover from Afghanistan.

Let me look at the pieces just for a minute. Al-Qaeda: In eight years of struggle against al-Qaeda, we have succeeded in moving its core leadership from Kandahar, Afghanistan, to a location completely unknown, believed to be about 100 kilometers away somewhere in Pakistan. But the truth is, despite the largest manhunt in history, we don't have a clue where Osama bin Laden is. We haven't had eyes on target since Tora Bora. We hear his voice. We know he's there, but we haven't a clue where he is. That makes the whole issue of trying to establish how critical and influential he is in al-Qaeda today all the more complex for analysts to understand.

What we do know is that this al-Qaeda core has successfully embedded itself in what I call a syndicate of terrorist organizations in Pakistan — the old Afghan Taliban, the new

Pakistan Taliban, groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, and Jaish-e-Mohammed. This is not a monolith; al-Qaeda is a very, very small part of a much larger syndicate. It has no central direction. It has various different agendas. But one thing stands out. They cooperate with each other on a practical level, and so far, none of them have been willing to turn on high-value target number one. In the last year-and-a-half, starting under the Bush administration, which deserves credit for building the program, we have begun to put significant pressure on al-Qaeda in Pakistan through the use of drones.

The Obama administration has escalated the use of the drones to about one attack a week. But as we saw in Khost in the last few days, the al-Qaeda core is far from defeated. They remain agile, they remain resilient, and they remain deadly. If, in fact, the Khost operation was the work of a triple agent, as many now seem to think, triple-agent operations are extraordinarily complex and difficult.

This demonstrates that the enemy we're dealing with is a very sophisticated and deadly one. I won't spend a lot of time on the situation in Afghanistan itself. Gen. McChrystal wrote a devastating and accurate report about the situation on the ground there, and Bob Woodward was nice enough to allow all of us to have the opportunity to read it in depth. If you haven't read it, I urge you to do so. I would only highlight one point. It's in the appendix, where he says that the detention facilities in Afghanistan are no longer under the control of the NATO-ISAF coalition; that, as a practical matter, those detention facilities are now operated internally by al-Qaeda and the Taliban. That is where the most important radicalization process of new al-Qaeda operatives is going on in Afghanistan today.

In a counterinsurgency, when you've lost control of the prisons where you put captured insurgents, you are in deep, deep trouble. Turning that around will be a very difficult issue. But it is not hopeless. Afghanistan 2010 is not Afghanistan 1980. We are not the Soviet Union, and we do not face a national uprising, as the Soviet Union did. When we fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan, we had the benefit that virtually the entire Afghan population was sympathetic to us — Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras, Pashtuns. The Taliban insurgency aspires to be that but is, in fact, a Pashtun insurgency. It has very little support outside of the Pashtun community. The good news for us: the majority of Afghans are not Pashtuns, and even a majority of the Pashtuns do not want to see a return to the medieval hell that Mullah Omar created in the second half of the 1990s. Smart policies can still reverse the momentum there.

Just a word about Pakistan. Pakistan is in the midst of an extraordinarily difficult transition from military dictatorship to democracy. We should support this transition enthusiastically, but we should recognize that this is Pakistan's fourth attempt. You have to believe in the triumph of hope over expectation to expect Pakistan will get there, but it is in our interest to encourage them to do so. The Pakistani military establishment, over the years, has proven incapable of running the country and has developed extensive intimate ties with the syndicate of terror that I talked about that runs along the borderlands and now deep into the heartland of Pakistan.

For a variety of reasons, mostly dealing with India, the Pakistani military establishment believes it must maintain at least parts of those relationships. In the last year, we have seen part of the jihadist Frankenstein in Pakistan actually turn against its old master. Today, Pakistan is witnessing the most serious political violence in the country's his-

tory. It is bordering on civil war in many ways. The good news here is that the Pakistani people seem to have increasingly come to the conclusion that their freedoms and their way of life are truly threatened by this jihadist monster. That wake-up is the best news we've seen in Pakistan in a long time.

Where do we go next? The first thing I would stress is that we cannot de-link Afghanistan and Pakistan. In fact, we cannot de-link Afghanistan from its larger regional environment. If we are to succeed in Afghanistan — whatever success means — it must be done within a larger regional environment. We will need to find ways to encourage all of Afghanistan's neighbors to help in trying to stabilize this country, and we will need to get other countries to help us to stabilize and solidify civilian control in Pakistan.

The president has embarked upon what I would call a very bold gamble. There are no guarantees of success. This strategy requires a very delicate interplay of military, political, diplomatic and economic activity. It all must be coordinated to build a synthesis that brings about what we want to have happen. It will cost a great deal; an American soldier deployed to Afghanistan costs about \$1 million per year, and there's no economy of scale. If you send more, it's not cheaper; it gets more expensive. It will also cost in blood and in lives.

The key in the long term for whether we succeed depends on our ability to build up an Afghan national security force — a combination of army, police and local militias — that can for the long term contain insurgencies in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, but potentially others in the future. Afghan states have been able to do that in the past. It is a myth that Afghanistan is an ungovernable space. That's bad history and a misunderstanding of the situation. But it's going to be extraordinarily difficult to do, and we've had a significant setback in the last year.

The Afghan presidential election was also a disaster. We had vote fraud on an extraordinary scale, one million fraudulent ballots. Even by the standards of Florida and Illinois, that is cheating to a remarkable degree. Worse than that, the perpetrators were caught and they got away with it. The legitimacy of the Afghan government in the eyes of the Afghan people — and in the eyes of Americans and Europeans who are sending their sons and daughters to fight there — has been severely crippled. If the president's strategy fails, I suspect we will look back and say, the election dealt it a fatal blow. But we must persevere, in any case, and see if we can't work around it now.

The president's decision is, in my view, the best of some very bad options. He only really had three. Option one was to cut and run. We can call it all kinds of different things: downsize the mission, reorient the mission. But nobody in Afghanistan and, just as important, nobody in Pakistan would see it as anything other than the United States once more packing its bags and leaving the locals to deal with the results of a failed intervention.

The second alternative was to stay where we were with exactly the forces, equipment and tactics that we had. Americans are rightly afraid that Afghanistan is going to turn into a quagmire, but I've got bad news for you: we're already in a quagmire. That's why the option of staying where we are was unacceptable. When you're waist deep in the Big Muddy, you can't say, I hope we won't get into the swamp. We're in the swamp; we have to find a way to do it better.

A final word about Pakistan. While Afghanistan is very, very hard, in many ways, Pakistan is even harder. We are trying to change the strategic direction of a country that is

inestimably more important in every way than Afghanistan. Trying to get Pakistan back on a healthy course is vital not just for Americans and Afghans, but for Indians, Chinese, Iranians and other people around the world. For 60 years, the United States has had a policy towards Pakistan that oscillated wildly between love affair and divorce. On some occasions, we have been madly in love with Pakistan's leaders, have turned our eyes away from all of their faults and thrown money at them with no accountability. In other years, we've had bitter and ugly divorces in which we've accused Pakistan of all kinds of ills and cut off assistance, even assistance that was in our interest to provide. The result of this is simple: Pakistanis have come to the conclusion that America is not a reliable ally, because America has not been a reliable ally.

What America needs in Pakistan is a policy of constancy and consistency — cajoling, encouraging, pressuring, supporting, helping, correcting, screaming — engagement at all times and at all levels, bearing in mind that we should always keep the civilian government at the top of the agenda of whom we deal with.

The stakes in Afghanistan and Pakistan today are enormous, not just for South Asia, but for Americans. This is the place from which the attack of September 11 was planned and coordinated. Recent events have underscored the risks we continue to run. They may have been orchestrated in Yemen this time, but the head of the snake, as far as we know, remains in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

But the stakes are also enormous for this president. Wars consume presidencies. This is now America's longest war, and it is bound to consume this presidency as well. Many of the president's advisers, particularly those who worry about domestic issues and health care and rebuilding a badly damaged American economy, for good reasons, do not want to see America bogged down in an endless war in Afghanistan. But that's what they inherited, and that's what they have to fix in the three years ahead.

PETER BERGEN: Co-Director, Counterterrorism Strategy Initiative, New America Foundation

Thank you very much for this invitation to speak at the Middle East Policy Council and to be on this distinguished panel. I want to start with some data about what Afghans think about Afghanistan. There's much discussion about what we think, but I think it's helpful to also take into account their opinions. There have been countrywide polls in Afghanistan by all sorts of organizations: the International Republican Institute, BBC News, the Asia Society. These polls have been conducted nationwide on a scientific basis every year, starting in 2005 with the BBC poll. The results are pretty surprising to people who think that the Afghan project is going south. When asked, what is your view of the United States in Afghanistan, according to the BBC, 68 percent of Afghans say they think that the United States is either doing a fair, good or excellent job. When asked the same question about NATO-ISAF, 78 percent of Afghans say that it is doing a fair, good or excellent job.

When asked, would you prefer to be ruled by the current government or the Taliban, 82 percent of Afghans say they prefer to be ruled by the current government, and only 4 percent say they'd like to be ruled by the Taliban. It is not surprising that there's one prophylactic against enthusiasm for the Taliban, and that is previous rule by the Taliban. There's nothing quite like being ruled by them to give you a negative view of them.

Consistently, by the way, the Taliban usually gets a 7 percent favorable rating in polls that were conducted back in 2005.

Who's the biggest threat to your security? Fifty-eight percent say the Taliban and only 8 percent say the United States. Is the national government doing a good job? In 2009, 71 percent said yes. Again, according to the BBC, was it mostly good or very good that the United States overthrew the Taliban? Last year, 69 percent said yes. And perhaps most astonishing — last year, again, from the BBC — 63 percent strongly support or somewhat support the U.S. military in Afghanistan. I think those numbers are very important when we have this discussion. Afghans want this to work. They're not opposed to international forces.

By the way, the same organizations routinely also poll in Pakistan. And to those who say, you can't trust polling data in Afghanistan, exactly the same polling organizations routinely poll in Pakistan and consistently find it to be one of the most anti-American countries in the world. I believe both polls. I think Pakistan is a very anti-American country. In Afghanistan our numbers have dropped from 80 percent to the 60 percent range. But we're conducting a counterinsurgency obviously in Afghanistan, and what is the central doctrine of the counterinsurgency? The center of gravity is the population. So, given that the population is basically at least half or more on our side, there are grounds to think that this is going to be a successful effort.

As you know, this was the least-resourced post-World War II reconstruction effort the United States has been engaged in. We spent something like 18 times more per capita in Bosnia and in Kosovo compared to what we did in Afghanistan. We got what we paid for. We did it on the cheap, and we know what the result is.

Having given you these sorts of data points, let me just make seven or eight quick points about what we're doing in Afghanistan because I think there are a lot of myths out there. This is not the graveyard of empires; this idea should be retired to the graveyard of clichés. All sorts of empires have gone into Afghanistan. But, unlike most of those other invasions, the Afghans do want us to perform.

To compare our occupation to the Soviets' is poor history on many levels. Bruce mentioned the fact there was a country-wide insurrection. Every ethnic group and every class was involved in it. Mark Urban, who's written the best account of the Afghan war in the early years, calculated that, at any given moment, there were 175,000 or 250,000 approximately full-time soldiers on the battlefield fighting the Soviets. Now, even if you take the largest number of Taliban full-time soldiers, it's 20,000. We're facing a relatively small insurgency compared to what the Soviets faced.

This will not be Obama's Vietnam; this is a crazy comparison. It might be his Afghanistan — that's a separate issue — but it will not be his Vietnam; it's a very different conflict. The North Vietnamese Army was a 500,000-man force supported by the Soviets and Mao; it was a major problem for the United States. At the height of the violence in Vietnam, 154 American soldiers were being killed every four days. That's the same number that were killed last year in Afghanistan. So policy by analogy doesn't work in this case.

The other thing that Bruce touched on, which I completely agree with — the idea that Afghanistan is not a nation-state — is absolutely ridiculous. In 1747, the Durrani Federation was founded, the beginning of Afghanistan as a nation. That makes it an older nation than the United States. The problem in Afghanistan is not the lack of nation-

hood as an idea; it's that, generally speaking, it has had a weak central state. There's nothing really wrong with that. Our trying to impose a very top-down central state has been part of our problem here.

Related to that, by the way, the most popular institution in Afghanistan, scoring enormously high numbers, is the Afghan national army. Building that up, obviously, is our ticket out. But when asked, which institution do you most admire, 82 percent say the Afghan national army, which is seen as not operating in any particular ethnic interest. It's seen as an institution that's really doing good work.

The other common view is that Afghanistan is just too hard or too violent. Well, this is also completely ridiculous. You were more likely to be murdered in the United States in 1991 than to be killed in the war in Afghanistan today. There were 24,000 murders in 1991 in the United States, a population of roughly 260 million. Last year in the violence in Afghanistan, something like 2,000-plus Afghan civilians died out of a population of roughly 30 million. You were basically as likely to be murdered visiting the United States as a tourist in 1991 than you are to be killed in Afghanistan today. You were also 20 times more likely to be killed as a civilian in Iraq at the height of the violence there. In Iraq, something like 35,000 civilians were dying every month in January of 2007 as the violence peaked, whereas last year, something like 2,000 civilians died in the violence in Afghanistan. And the populations of the two countries are roughly the same. This is not to say that there isn't a problem.

As for the idea that Afghans are resistant to foreigners, I think the 63 percent favorable view of the United States military speaks for itself. Why should it be a success, other than the fact that the population is on our side? A very common polling question is, what's your view of the future? When Americans were asked this question at the end of the Bush administration in the middle of this great recession, I was surprised that only 17 percent had a favorable view of the future. When Afghans were asked the same question at the same time, 40 percent had a favorable view of the future. That's sort of surprising given the fact that we know all the bad things — the most corrupt country in the world, a huge drug problem, a rising insurgency. But the reason that Afghans answered as they did is that this all looks a lot better than what they've lived through.

Can you think of any other country in history that lived through the Soviet occupation and Communist government, then warlordism and then the Taliban? This is a pretty bad combination. Each one of these would be devastating to a country. So, even though we know all the problems that have existed in Afghanistan, what is going on today is better — certainly much better — than what has gone on in the past. And 4.5 million of the refugees have returned. This is a very important number. Four million refugees left Iraq as a result of the occupation and the civil war. Almost none of those refugees have returned, maybe several hundred thousand if you're being generous. Refugees do not return to places they don't think have a future, and Afghans think that Afghanistan has a future. Millions of people are in school, including girls, obviously. When asked, do you have more freedom than under the Taliban in a recent poll, 75 percent of Afghans said, yes.

Let's say we solve Afghanistan, given all I've just said. There's still the problem of Pakistan, which Bruce has already ably discussed. But there's been no 9/11 moment in Pak-

istan, though cumulatively, 9/11 has happened in Pakistan. If you take the death of Benazir Bhutto — the most popular politician in Pakistan’s modern history, who would have scored a landslide victory in this election — together with the seismic attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore (cricket being a form of religion in Pakistan); the 17-year-old girl flogged by the Taliban (the video was widely distributed in Pakistan); and the deaths of something like a thousand civilians just this year in the Northwest Frontier Province alone, including a hundred people attending a volleyball game just two days ago — you take all these together and you find that Pakistanis’ support for suicide bombing and the Taliban and al-Qaeda is cratering. Several years ago, 33 percent of Pakistanis thought that suicide bombing was sort of okay in certain circumstances. That number has dropped to 5 percent.

So the Pakistani operations in Swat and Waziristan are now done with the full support of the Pakistani people. The army can’t conduct a war in their own country against elements of their own population without the support of their own population. They didn’t have that in the operations in North and South Waziristan in 2005 and 2006. These were sort of performance-art operations that were basically designed to satisfy the United States.

The operation in Waziristan today is a real operation — a real military operation. The operation in Swat may not have been conducted to American counterinsurgency standards, but it’s been successful. So Pakistan is changing. Now, will they go after the Afghan Taliban? Who knows? Will they go after al-Qaeda? Who knows? But the enemy of the perfect is not the reasonably okay. What we’re seeing in Pakistan is probably the closest alignment between American strategic objectives and Pakistani strategic objectives since the Soviets invaded in 1979.

Two final points: Advocates of doing less — the “cut and run” option that Bruce mentioned or doing it lighter in various shapes or forms — have to answer two questions. One, we’ve done this already. We’ve done the do-nothing option, which was closing our embassy in 1989, zeroing out aid to one of the poorest countries in the world and just washing our hands of it. Into that vacuum stepped the Taliban and al-Qaeda. And we’ve already done the “lite” option, which is basically Bush’s ideological aversion to nation-building. We got what we paid for, and the Taliban and al-Qaeda came back, this time morphed together much more closely ideologically and tactically.

A final point: I think we can define down some of our goals in Afghanistan in an important way based on what the Afghans actually want. The Afghans don’t necessarily want a particularly legitimate government. We all want legitimate governments as a desirable goal, but they haven’t had much experience. The Taliban did have a certain legitimacy because they brought security. The warlords had no legitimacy, didn’t bring security. Obviously, the Soviets had no legitimacy. So the Afghans are not really expecting a kind of ultra-capable, ultra-legitimate government. What they are expecting is security. And I think the new Obama plan will deliver that.

The final piece of polling data is that, when asked their principal concern, 34 percent of Afghans in a recent poll said, my principal concern is security. Only 4 percent said, corruption. The new plan, I think, can begin to deliver security. After all, why did the Taliban come to power? The one good they did deliver was security. If we can deliver security and then other things in addition — which we will — that is a plan for real progress in Afghanistan.

FRANK ANDERSON: President, Middle East Policy Council

First, let me repeat Tom's words of thanks to everyone for coming, and then in the interest of time, I'll get right at this.

In some form or another, I've been engaged in or working on Afghanistan for 27 years, and I probably read everything that comes out, at least in English, on the subject. I've recently traveled there and will again. I suppose I've become an expert. But, from the point of view of policy prescriptions, the more I know, the less I understand. In 1982, I had easy explanations for what the United States ought to do in Afghanistan. They're much less easily at hand now. Afghanistan is a dizzyingly complex place.

It's geopolitically complex. Its relationship with Pakistan and its other neighbors is almost impossible to easily fix or even describe. It's culturally and politically complex. Every time I look at the place, I find another level of social organization that I didn't know about before. Regarding this complexity, I'm going to quote Sarah Chayes of NPR, recently a development activist in Afghanistan, who said, "You can't analyze it. You have to experience it to the point that you develop intimacy." And in that intimacy, numbers aren't often useful. It's just repeated experience and reflection.

My experience and reflection now bring me to a couple of memories. One of them is surprisingly not from a geopolitician or a government person, but a pop psychologist. Eric Berne wrote a book in the 1960s called "Games People Play." One of the games that people play is "let's you and him fight." In my government experience, it was the essential game of the Cold War. We fought by proxies and it was "let's you and him fight." Every time Afghanistan is invaded, every time it interacts with people — states — from the outside, a complex game of "let's you and him fight" goes on. In order not to be drawn into it, one has to develop intimacy.

I want to point out some sources for intimate understanding today. They come from, a poet, a journalist, a development activist and a wanderer. The poet is Rudyard Kipling. So many of us who have been involved in Afghanistan have read Kipling, but I'll remind you of his poem, "Arithmetic on the Frontier." He begins it by expressing some dismay over the British determination that one had to be educated expensively before being "reckoned fit to face the foe." Then come the lines:

A scrimmage in a Border Station,
A canter down some dark defile
Two thousand pounds of education
Drops to a ten-rupee jezail...

Strike hard who cares — shoot straight who can —
The odds are on the cheaper man....

One sword-knot stolen from the camp
Will pay for all the school expenses
Of any Kurrum Valley scamp...

Who knows no word of moods and tenses,
But, being blessed with perfect sight,
Picks off our messmates left and right...

With home-bred hordes the hillsides teem,
The troop-ships bring us one by one,
At vast expense of time and steam ...

The 'captives of our bow and spear'
Are cheap — alas! — as we are dear.

My experience in government and in life absolutely supports Kipling's judgment that the odds are on the cheaper man. It wasn't an Afghan experience, but an early experience with the failed 1980 plan to rescue the hostages held in our embassy in Iran, plus lots of reading of military history that have led me to believe that the odds are on the simpler plan.

Our 1980s involvement in Afghanistan against the Soviets definitely put us on the side of the cheaper man. It was very expensive even then for the Soviets, with proximity, to get and support their people there. We, on the other hand, had no requirement to recruit or train or transport or command the forces in Afghanistan. At that time, "the hillsides teemed with hordes" that flocked to the fight. The 1980s *mujahedeen* had also clearly inherited that "perfect sight" that enabled their ancestors to pick off Kipling's messmates left and right.

Our 1980s plan was simple and time-proven: to make life so miserable and costly for the Soviets that they would pack up and leave. All we had to do was provide guns, ammunition and a surprisingly small amount of cash to those "teeming hordes." We did require help from Pakistan and several other states, and we did have to operate a relatively long and expensive supply line. But our challenges were cheap and simple compared to those of the Soviets.

I think we've been strongly, and justifiably, criticized for not picking up the more complex and costly long-run job of post-conflict development when the Soviets left. The result was an Afghanistan that descended further into chaos until the Taliban were the only option to provide security and services. They brought order and protection to the people of Afghanistan. They managed to conquer it, not always through fighting, but, more frequently, through negotiation as they moved through the country. As ugly as it was, their regime did provide security and protection to the people, except from themselves, until they went the way of every recent political force in Afghanistan. Ultimately, they became so rapacious and oppressive that the people of Afghanistan welcomed us and NATO forces when we returned in 2001.

I believe that our failure to sustain that welcome since 2001 is less one of being diverted than it is of being mired down in expense and complexity. In the very beginning, the game of "let's you and him fight" was played to our detriment. While the *mujahedeen* were our proxy army in the 1980s, we have become the proxy army for Afghan factions as they fight among themselves.

Sarah Chayes does a good job in her book *The Punishment of Virtue* of describing how U.S. forces frustrated the appointment of a governor of Kandahar. President Karzai appointed a tribal relative, someone he believed to be the right man and who certainly had the tribal and paramilitary force behind him, to take the job. U.S. Special Forces, on the other hand, installed a tribal rival. We lost that early game of "let's you and him fight." All the tribal rival had to do was point and call the other guy "Taliban."

We've gotten ourselves into an expensive and complex war in which we need the reform or transformation of Pakistan in order to succeed. In the 1980s, it was the Soviets who needed to transform Afghan society in order to succeed. The Taliban and our other enemies do not need to transform their society or ours to succeed.

Right now, as Bruce has pointed out, the leader of the government we're seeking to develop is providing, at best, lukewarm support to our reform agenda, and there are those who complain that he's actively obstructing it. Our plan still and increasingly depends on long and expensive supply lines. Bruce mentioned a million dollars a year per soldier. There's an oft-quoted number I've been trying to verify that's become a cultural truth: It's said that it costs \$400 per gallon for every bit of fuel that is put into an International Security in Afghanistan Force (ISAF) truck in Kabul, Mazar-e Sharif, Herat or Kandahar.

We have to maintain cooperation with neighboring states that have mutually incompatible interests. Forget the complexity of Pakistan. Pakistan and India are both vigorously pursuing programs that each believes is inimical to the interests of the other. Pakistan has many reasons to believe that our aims and theirs in Afghanistan are in conflict. Not all of these reasons are illegitimate.

Our efforts to develop a corps of people who have the language and cultural understanding to produce this intimacy are being frustrated. We've just been treated to news of the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff rebuking the service chiefs because they were unable to come up with even one-fourth of the required 900 members of an envisioned Afghan/Pakistan expertise course.

In place after place in Afghanistan, we are being dragged into games of "let's you and him fight." The Pashtun minority in Afghanistan is increasingly being led to believe, or already believes, that we are supporting a civil war on behalf of other ethnic groups. A visit to Camp Eggers in downtown Kabul and a walk around the U.S. embassy, where most walls are festooned with pictures of the late Tajik leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, would indicate, I think wrongly, to any Pashtun walking around that we're on the other side.

Let me again recommend to you Sarah Chayes' *The Punishment of Virtue*. The book centers on the incident I described, where U.S. special operations blocked Hamid Karzai's choice for governor of Kabul and the events that followed. Chayes interweaves into this story a history that's well-written, well-organized and based on a lot of her own research with original sources.

A second really important source of understanding of the country can be taken from Joel Hafvenstein's *The Opium Season*, which details his year as a subcontractor for USAID, 2004-05, working to provide alternative livelihoods to draw the workforce away from opium production. It provides a great view of the violence, corruption and complex tribal and warlord relations. Moreover, it shows the bureaucratic profiteering and dysfunction that is increasing the complexity and cost of our involvement, not just in wars but in development.

A third outstanding source is Rory Stewart's *The Places in Between*. Within weeks after the fall of the Taliban, Stewart walked through Tajik, Hazara and Pashtun villages, from Herat to Kabul in the winter, which is supposed to kill you. He describes an experience that I think any soldier, diplomat or development expert must read before attempting to understand Afghanistan.

These three people, who can be accused of having an intimate understanding, are not advocates of “cut and run.” Their prescriptions, like those of Peter and Bruce, are based on the requirement to provide security for the people of Afghanistan. Sadly, now, that security must not only be protection from the Taliban or predatory warlords, but also from the organs of the state that we are seeking to advance and stabilize.

Stewart comments that we do have the possibility of a more realistic, affordable and therefore sustainable process, but it would not make Afghanistan stable or predictable. It would merely be a small, if necessary, part of an Afghan political strategy. The United States and its allies would only moderately influence and fund a strategy shaped and led by Afghans themselves. We’ve got to come up with a way to do that simply, and that simplicity has to be based on intimate understanding, so that we can stop losing the game of “let’s you and him fight.”

Looking forward 18 months, I don’t believe that we ought to cut and run. If you had asked me just a few months ago, I would have said, get out. But I believe now that we must transform ourselves. We have to somehow get to the point where we can afford this involvement. Notwithstanding polls in Afghanistan, polls in the United States indicate that we have a very limited time in which we can continue to invest blood and treasure. We have to address our structural problems and incompetencies. I don’t know if we can do this.

There are now thick field manuals and Army regulations on how to deal with contractors on the battlefield. USAID has very few people who actually go out and run a project. Everyone in the agency now interacts with a contractor. I’m on a contract to the Office of the Secretary of Defense. It is, I think, a well-conceived and well-executed program, but it costs at least three or four times what it would cost if government employees were carrying it out.

Our own political system is not going to be changed in the coming years, but this is one of the incompetencies with which we have to struggle. I profoundly believe that the president’s ability to reformulate strategy in the last few months was hampered almost to the point of impossibility by the other side’s criticism that “you in your campaign described this as the good war. Now make it a good one.” The opponents never fail to pick up the cudgel of “you’re not listening to your generals.” The last administration was similarly beat about the head, neck and shoulders by the Democratic Party as it tried to formulate a policy. The partisan shots are not just unseemly; they’re enervating. Another element of our incompetence pointed out by Joel Hafvenstein is this: Our efforts to reduce opium production in Afghanistan were hampered by U.S. agricultural interests that won’t let us promote the production of cotton, one of the few crops that could be cost competitive. That’s got to be fixed.

I think we’ve got to get outside the box. As Bruce and Peter said, we’ve got to solve this in a regional way. Some opportunities are arising. CSIS has come out with a report suggesting that our efforts to establish an alternative logistics path through the former states of the Soviet Union are creating new transportation relationships that might grow into a modern Silk Road that could be an engine for development in the region.

I’ll end on my original expression of humility. As time goes on, I am less confident in my ability to provide policy prescriptions. I can only say that the ones we are trying to carry out now are far too complex and far too costly to succeed in the time that we have available.

MARC SAGEMAN: Principal, Sageman Consulting, LLC

I want to start with a disclaimer. I completely agree with Frank. The more I learn from personal experience and from extensive studies on Afghanistan, the less I know.

First of all, we're not dealing with a war. We're dealing with two wars. They're rather disconnected and independent of each other. The one that nobody really talks about is probably the most important. The one that nobody talks about is a war fought here in Washington within the Beltway. This will have far more impact on Afghanistan than what's happening in Afghanistan itself. This war is fought on the field of polemical exaggeration, hysteria and obfuscation that actually hide the reality on the ground in Afghanistan. It's driven by naked political ambition rather than the national interest, and it leads to very strange bedfellows. As we see right now, the president has far more support with the Republicans than he has with his own party.

What is the surge going to do? It is going to increase opposition to the war, as we have seen already, not only in this country but also in Europe, where, of course, our NATO allies are right there with

us. This, as Frank mentioned, gives us limited time to do something because, with the surge, we are going to see increased numbers of deaths and the images of body bags being flown back. The number of deaths — not just ours but deaths of Afghans — will paradoxically

increase domestic terrorism, both in this country and in the West because of the moral outrage. I can only refer you to what happened two months ago with Major Hasan killing people at Fort Hood. So, in a sense, the surge paradoxically, and ironically, will accelerate our withdrawal from Afghanistan, especially by 2012, because it is going to be a huge issue in the presidential election. And, of course, much of it will depend on what happens in our election 10 months from now, when we see how many seats the Democrats are going to lose in Congress.

Enough about Washington; what about Afghanistan itself? There are four issues and they are not totally linked; they have some independence: Afghanistan, of course, Pakistan, the Taliban and al-Qaeda. I don't really have the time to get into Pakistan, but a lot probably will depend on internal factors there.

In terms of Afghanistan, let me repeat several times: We do not have any vital interest in Afghanistan, period. We do not have any vital interest in Afghanistan except for domestic national security. That is why we are in Afghanistan. As a matter of fact, we are looking very closely at Yemen right now. Ten years ago, we would have been looking at Sudan — in fact, 15 years ago. And we are looking closely at Somalia.

This leads to the next question: What is the threat here in the United States or in the West? I've done a comprehensive survey of all al-Qaeda-like plots — successful and unsuccessful — in the West in the last 20 years since the creation of al-Qaeda. There's been no al-Qaeda resurgence, as trumpeted three years ago even by some people on this panel. There have been only two plots in the last three years linked to al-Qaeda. That was Ham-

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mad Khurshid in Denmark in September 2007 and probably Najibullah Zazi in New York and Denver. There has been no fatality in the West linked to al-Qaeda in nearly five years.

If you look at the plots, over 80 percent are homegrown, without any relationship to any terrorist organization. Of those that have some relationship to a terrorist organization, it is no longer al-Qaeda. It's the IJU, an Uzbek group; it's Lashkar-e-Taiba, as pointed out by Bruce; it was Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the Barcelona plot; and now al-Shabaab in Somalia, the fellow who tried to kill the cartoonist in Denmark last week; al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, the underwear bomber; and people are always afraid of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in North Africa.

So there are a few Afghans in al-Qaeda and almost no al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. If we trace the plots that have any connection to terrorist groups in the West in the last eight years, we see that none — and I repeat, none — can be traced back to Afghanistan. Those that I traced back to terrorist groups until this past year are all connected to Pakistan, and now to Yemen and Somalia. In order to actually promote national security here, we need to focus on the groups that can project into the West, those I just mentioned. The Afghan insurgents do not project into the West. They have a domestic agenda.

What are our stated goals for being in Afghanistan? To disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda and its allies? This has mostly been accomplished in Afghanistan. They have moved to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, as pointed out by Bruce. So we have succeeded in part of that. We have not defeated al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda is not dead, as was shown last week by the killing of the CIA officers in Khost.

What is the surge going to do for us in the next 18 months? It's going to be very uneven, and it will depend on the implementation of what we do. It's going to vary according to the locality in Afghanistan. Some efforts will be good, and those of course will be trumpeted in Washington. Those that will be bad will also be trumpeted in Washington, because you have two camps.

What we really should be able to do is to isolate the foreigners — namely al-Qaeda and the mostly foreign terrorist groups — from the locals, especially from the Taliban. This is much easier than defeating the Taliban. But now that we are in Afghanistan, what is our goal there? I would put it to you that our goals are threefold, and they are all political. One is to provide security, the second is to help develop good governance and the third is to stimulate the economy.

Let's look at each one in turn. I believe the surge will improve security. It may even temporarily, at least, prevent a civil war within Afghanistan. What do I mean by good governance? The provision of administration to provide justice. This is something the Taliban did fairly well, actually, which is why it had some popularity. People now reminisce with nostalgia about that, despite what Peter says. They don't like the Taliban, but they did like the fairness and the lack of corruption. So it's to provide fair dispute resolution, to provide justice, and to decrease the corruption and nepotism that paralyzes any local initiative.

Unfortunately for us, this is up to the Afghans to do. We cannot impose our institutions from the top. From my own experience with the Afghans — and I was in contact very intensively with them day to day for three years — you realize the limits of your power with them. You can't really control them — and I had a wad of cash to give them

— but you can push them gently toward the goal. We have to be very cognizant of our own limitations; this is very much an Afghan issue.

Third, we need to stimulate their economy. This means they have to have jobs and a sense of purpose. This is dependent on good leadership, which, of course, is absent — as Bruce told you, the leader has little legitimacy because of the disaster of the election — and investment, which we actually can provide.

This has led me to go back and review what Soviet policy was in Afghanistan for 10 years. It has been bad-mouthed so far in this panel, but I was on the other side. I was intimately involved in running the war against the Soviets for three years, and I couldn't afford to underestimate the enemy. We should not repeat their mistakes. We should learn from them.

The Soviets had an advantage. They were dealing with a less corrupt Afghan government, and they were dealing with fairly strong leadership as soon as they got rid of Babrak Karmal and put Najibullah in as the president. Najibullah was a fairly effective president and not corrupt, and the Soviets did not have any pressure from domestic protest because they hid the body bags. They actually did not tell the population how many people they lost until after the war. They were very careful about that; nobody could mention Afghanistan.

They developed a fairly efficient and effective counterinsurgency doctrine after 1986. They learned from their mistakes after about six years, and what they did is exactly what we are suggesting right now. This, to me, was a surprise because it was fairly sophisticated. They were preaching national reconciliation and achieved quite a bit of success with it. They withdrew from the countryside, consolidating the cities and providing security in the cities and on the roads for most of the time they were there. I know because I was very frustrated; I was trying to disrupt that security from my side. They encouraged armed local militias in order to frustrate me and my colleagues at the time, the mujahedeen. They were pretty good. They also had a fairly decent administration for dispensing justice for this kind of conflict resolution, and they built roads, schools, factories and hospitals. That sounds really familiar.

What did that give them? It gave them a decent interval of three years from the time they withdrew to the time Najibullah fell. That decent interval lasted as long as the money and support flowed from the Soviet Union. As soon as Yeltsin took over, he cut it off and Najibullah fell within months.

We have some advantages over the Soviets. The war was very unpopular with the public. We have professional soldiers, and the morale is much higher than that of the Soviet Army. We don't have a superpower on the other side supporting the resistance. There are no Stingers. Can you imagine what would happen right now if the Taliban had Stingers to shoot down our helicopters? It would be a disaster. And we have not killed as many civilians as the Soviets did. They probably killed close to a million people, which earned them tremendous unpopularity, as pointed out by Peter.

So what's going to happen in 18 months? We're going to withdraw, mostly by 2012, because of the elections. As I said, the primary challenge is the one within the Beltway. We will increase security in Afghanistan, but the question is, will that security be enough to allow the Afghans to take responsibility for the future and develop their own country?

That's the key issue. I'm fairly pessimistic, because it depends on having a good Afghan partner, and right now, I don't think we have one yet. Karzai lacks legitimacy and is unpopular in this country.

So it really will depend on security, which I think is achievable. Good governance is a big question mark. And, of course, with good governance comes, with our own money, investment in jobs, jobs, jobs. Without these, Afghanistan will not be a positive scenario in the future.

I must conclude by pointing out that this is not going to affect our domestic national security. As we have seen with the last three plots, the underwear bomber was helped in Yemen; he came from Nigeria and London. The attack on the Danish cartoonist came from Somalia. And Major Hasan came from Washington, D.C.

Q&A

Q: What I am hearing now in this seminar and the last few is exactly what I was hearing before the Iraq War. The premise was that we would be hailed as liberators because Saddam Hussein was unpopular and that we would have Western, secular democracy. Now, there is an Islamic system. Have you checked the hypothesis that we are not the Soviets and that Afghan people love us? The British were doing the same thing in India. They developed railroads, schools, colleges, and sent Indians to Britain for education and to understand the blessings of Western civilization. Are we not doing the same thing other colonial and imperial powers tried and failed at, believing their own premises? I have visited Pakistan twice in the last three years. I heard them say that this is exactly the same jihad against foreigners that they fought in the 1980s, now against the Americans.

BERGEN: The difference between the Soviet occupation and the American — and by the way, the 42 other countries that are involved in the effort in Afghanistan — is like night and day. Marc Sageman touched on this briefly, but I think it's important to remember that 1.5 million Afghans — 10 percent of the population — were killed by the Soviets, and 5 million of them became refugees. It was the largest refugee population in history at the time; a third of the population left. The Soviets also left the most heavily mined country in the world. To compare this to what is happening today is really not very good history.

On the issue of whether this is similar to what we were doing in Iraq in 2003, I think a more relevant question is, what are the similarities to where we were in Iraq when the surge was a question of great interest to policy makers and everybody else in the country? Think about the Iraq surge for one second. The Iraq surge, which I personally opposed along with practically everybody else on the panel, I thought was just doubling down on a bad bet. Part of the reason I opposed it was a lack of knowledge about what was actually going on in Iraq. The Iraq surge went into probably one of the nastiest civil wars in recent history. The Ministry of the Interior at the time of the surge was essentially a Shia death squad. No matter how bad the Afghan situation is right now, it is not embroiled in a major civil war, nor is the government essentially a sectarian entity, as the government of Iraq was at the time. So actually, this surge is going into a much better situation than existed in Iraq.

Addressing the American domestic scene, Americans are much less casualty-averse than most people suspect. There's very good academic data — Peter Feaver of Duke University has done a lot of work on this — showing that what Americans don't like is losing. When they were losing in Iraq, the war was very unpopular. It's almost a non-issue, now that it seems to be stabilizing. So I think if the surge, as Marc says, brings more security and Americans feel there's progress being made, the casualties that come with that are going to be "handled" politically. The worst months of the war in Iraq were six months after the surge, when 120 Americans were being killed every month. But as the situation stabilized, the American domestic political scene changed. I think you'll see the same thing on Afghanistan.

Q: Are you concerned that this recent focus on Yemen will result in dwindling support for the war in Afghanistan, especially here on Capitol Hill? I'd also be interested to hear how you assess this threat from Yemen. Is some kind of direct U.S. military intervention thinkable there?

RIEDEL: Anyone who wants direct U.S. military intervention in Yemen needs to have their head examined. We've got enough on our plate as it is. We don't need a third war in the Middle East. The experience of foreign armies in Yemen, most recently the Egyptians, ought to be one that cautions anyone who thinks there's a made-in-America solution to the problem of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. AQAP has become a more powerful and more dangerous foe in the last year at the direction of Osama bin Laden — and AQAP has said it was at the direction of Osama bin Laden. The al-Qaeda cells in Saudi Arabia, which had been effectively repressed by the Saudis, merged with the al-Qaeda cells in Yemen. It proved to be quite a smart strategic move. They seem to have benefited from the interaction between the two.

They seem to have found a very clever bombmaker. He may have failed in his two attempts — one on the deputy minister of interior, Mohammed bin Nayef, last August, and the second on the flight from Amsterdam to Detroit — but I wouldn't bet on their failing every time. If the bomb had gone off properly on that flight to Detroit, we would have had a catastrophic incident. The president quite rightly put it the other day, "We dodged a bullet." I think inside his own head, he knows something even more important: He dodged a catastrophic bullet.

We will have to apply to Yemen a reasonable amount of effort to try to assist a very weak partner, president Ali Abdullah Saleh, to focus on al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. We should have no illusions about this partner. His enthusiasm for the mission is very limited; he has a lot on his plate. But if we give him the support, if we help Yemen, if we provide the intelligence support, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula can be brought under control. At least, we have to make every effort to do so.

I think your larger question was, should they now be diverted from Pakistan to Yemen? I don't think so. Marc and I disagree on some of the particulars, but I think we come down on the same bottom line: The most dangerous threats over the last several years have all originated out of Pakistan. Certainly, the most dangerous threat of them all, the failed attempt in August of 2006 to down multiple airliners over the Atlantic, was based in Pakistan.

Barack Obama inherited the reality that we are at war in Afghanistan. We don't have a time machine. We can't go back and redo the war the right way. What happens in that war will have a tremendous impact across the border, which is the far more important strategic prize in this conflict.

Q: Most of the Pashtun areas don't have security; they don't get benefits from reconstruction, let alone economic development. If this situation continues, this will be to the benefit of the Taliban or al-Qaeda. What can we do to include Pashtuns in this process of security, economic development and good governance?

BERGEN: One thing that Afghanistan lacks is effective Pashtun political parties. Right now, they're stuck with a choice between Hamid Karzai and the Taliban. My understanding is that this is not something Karzai has encouraged. So perhaps in the next five years, you'll have Pashtun political parties emerge, similar to the ANP, for instance, in FATA [the Federally Administered Tribal Areas] and the Northwest Frontier Province, secular Pashtun political parties that represent an alternative that isn't necessarily the Taliban. Obviously, a lot of Pashtuns feel excluded from potential benefits of the Afghan national polity, but I do think the most important good that we can deliver is security.

Let me give you one useful benchmark that will be very observable in the next 18 months, similar to "Route Irish," the road between Baghdad airport and Baghdad. It was the most dangerous road in the world for about three years. You were very likely to be killed by a suicide bomber if you drove down it. The fact that that was the most dangerous road in the world said everything you needed to know about Iraq. The Kabul-to-Kandahar road, which used to be a 17-hour trip under the Taliban, went down to about seven hours, and in 2005 and 2006, I could take randomly selected cabs from the Kandahar bazaar and drive that road without incident. If anybody in the room took it today, you'd be effectively signing your own death warrant. This is the most important road politically and economically in the country, and it will be very observable in the next 18 months if it returns to a road that actually can be used. That would be a sign of real progress. That's the kind of thing that most Pashtuns want. That road connects the Pashtun capital to the national capital. That's the sort of thing that the new surge will be able to deliver.

MATTAIR: Peter, in response to what Marc is saying, how would you define a vital U.S. interest in Afghanistan, when Gen. Jones has said there are probably only 100 al-Qaeda fighters there?

BERGEN: There were 200 members of al-Qaeda on 9/11, so small numbers of people can affect history very greatly; and talking about Afghanistan without talking about Pakistan would be like talking about Palestine without talking about Israel, or vice versa. We may say there's a border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, but none of the people we've been talking about today do. The Pakistani Taliban don't recognize the border; the Afghan Taliban don't recognize the border. By the way, that's a misnomer since all the Afghan Taliban are really headquartered in Pakistan. Lashkar-e-Taiba doesn't recognize the border. The Islamic Jihad Union doesn't recognize the border. Al-Qaeda doesn't

recognize the border. The border doesn't exist. So, to talk about Afghanistan without reference to the fact that all these groups are headquartered in Pakistan and go back and forth all the time is not right. And the 82nd Airborne or the 10th Mountain is not about to invade Pakistan. That is not going to happen unless there is a major attack in the United States that can be traceable back to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

However, given that fact, what we're doing in Afghanistan is a countersanctuary strategy so that they don't also take over Afghanistan, as they did once before. We know what a vacuum in Afghanistan produces. So that's what we're trying to do, the countersanctuary strategy. We're also trying to affect what goes on in Pakistan. These things are interrelated.

On the question of whether al-Qaeda threatens us or not, it's not the number of attacks that al-Qaeda gets through; it's the lethality or the threatening nature of each attack. 9/11 was the biggest terrorist attack in history. "Seven/seven" (7/7), which was directed by al-Qaeda in London on July 7, 2005, was the deadliest terrorist attack in British history. If the planes plot had succeeded, as Bruce points out, there would have been 1,500 dead Americans, Canadians and Brits in the middle of the Atlantic in 2006. If the Northwest Airlines bombing had worked, that would have basically closed down the global economy and killed the American economy in the middle of the nastiest recession since the Great Depression.

Al-Qaeda is the group that is doing these attacks. Major Hasan killed 13 people, sort of a big deal, but not a national-security problem. Would the Northwest flight have been a 9/11-style event, or would it have been like Pan Am 103? It's an interesting question. In the post-9/11 world, I don't think it looks like Pan Am 103. I think it looks bigger.

Q: For many years, from this podium, Chas Freeman criticized the Bush/Cheney administration for practicing what he called diplomacy-free foreign policy, so I'd like to ask about the diplomatic dimensions. A critical aspect of the Afghan War is obviously the fact that it has historically been a surrogate war between Pakistan and India. The support for al-Qaeda, the Taliban and these elements from within the ISI and others in Pakistan are all oriented towards the fact that India is seen as exploiting Afghanistan as a rear flank in the conflict with Pakistan. Yet it seems that the Indian government, in the recent period, has recognized that there's a shift in Pakistan and that the attacks that are going on against the internal jihadi forces are a more serious factor. The prime minister of India pulled 30,000 troops out of Kashmir recently.

Similarly, the Russians see a benefit to solving this Af-Pak problem because they're giving us a degree of logistical support that's unprecedented, even beyond what they did in 2001 after 9/11. And the Chinese have a strong vested interest in dealing with the fact that there are certain bases of operation for the Uighur network. Are there diplomatic avenues that go beyond U.S.-NATO cooperation, that involve people who have a much more immediate vested interest in long-term stability, economic development and solving these regional problems. The other thing I worry about is that we're headed for an Iran crisis that may change this equation radically. How much has that been taken into account in the deliberations on Afghan policy? What would be the implications of an Israeli or larger military action against Iran over the nuclear issue?

RIEDEL: You're absolutely right. The diplomatic dimension to this is absolutely critical. I think the strategy the president outlined in March put that at the top of the agenda. I know we've spent a lot of time talking about the counterinsurgency part, and for good reason. That's the most expensive part; that's the part where body bags come home. But I firmly believe the regional diplomatic part of it is much more significant for the long-term chances of stabilizing Afghanistan and, even more important, Pakistan.

If you look at the travels of Richard Holbrooke, you'll see that he's been on the case. He's at least going around and making the effort. How far he's succeeded is too early to tell. If you recall, just a year ago, the president spoke inadvertently to *Time* magazine about the importance of working the Pakistani-Indian dimension. I think he learned an important lesson from that. You can't talk about that dimension, but that doesn't detract from the fact that it's absolutely vital. If we want to change Pakistani behavior, we have to deal with the thing that drives it, and that's India. It got a whole lot more difficult 13 months ago in Mumbai, when Lashkar-e-Taiba, probably with the assistance of al-Qaeda, carried out that attack. Why did they do that? Precisely to make it more difficult to get a reduction in tensions between Pakistan and India.

The jihadists we are fighting have understood from the beginning of this conflict that, if you want to take the heat off of them in Pakistan, heat up the border between India and Pakistan. That's why, after we drove al-Qaeda and the Taliban out of Afghanistan in 2001, they attacked the Indian parliament. It was a brilliant tactical move that resulted in strategic space for them.

In order to try to improve relations between Pakistan and India, we have to do something that American diplomacy is not good at — not talk about it, operate under the radar screen and be supportive of others, not try to have the stage all to ourselves. I'm not sure American diplomacy can do it, frankly; I don't think it's in our genes. But that's what we need to do. Is the administration working on that? As I said at the beginning, I'm not a spokesman for the administration, but I would point you to one fact. The first state visit of this administration was with the Indian leadership, because I think this administration understands exactly how important that is.

I realize most of you don't know that the state dinner included Indians because we'd become obsessed with a couple from Virginia that showed up uninvited, but, fortunately, in India they do understand it was about the importance of the U.S.-Indian relationship. Is it impossible? No, I don't think it's impossible. In one of the most important journalistic pieces of this past year, Steve Coll pointed out in *The New Yorker*, in an article about the back channel, that India and Pakistan have actually come a long way over the last several years in finding the basis for a solution to their longstanding problems. They didn't find it, but they've come a long way towards finding it. American diplomacy should have, as its objective, trying to help Indians and Pakistanis get back to that back channel and to try to put this back on track. I won't say much about Russia, other than that the amount of support we've gotten from the Russians is not quite as high as you'd have hoped.

As for the Chinese, I will unabashedly push a new paper that the Brookings Institution is putting out this week on our website on how the United States and China should work together to try to improve the stability of Pakistan. Pakistanis regard us as the un-

reliable ally — that's not the terminology they usually use; it's a little more colorful than that, but I won't use it in this mixed audience. But they regard China as the reliable ally, the all-weather friend. We need to get the Chinese involved in this in a big way.

On Iran, you're absolutely right. If we enter into a period of confrontation with Iran now, the Iranians will look for ways to hurt us, and the easiest way for the Iranians to hurt us right now is Obama's war right next door [See Sadat and Hughes, page 31]. The most prosperous, efficient and effective part of Afghanistan today is around the city of Herat, because the Iranians provide electricity, economic development and assistance with security. They could change that overnight, if they wanted to.

As we think about how to go forward with Iran, which I would be the first to admit is a very serious national-security problem for us, we have to think of it in this regional dimension and how what we do with Iran will affect the war in Afghanistan.

SAGEMAN: I would just mention the Indian-Chinese dimension. Since the Chinese are allied with Pakistan, you also have to look at it through the Indian-Chinese connection as well, and that, of course, complicates it even further.

MATTAIR: Russia promised us thousands of flights a year to deliver lethal equipment to our troops in Afghanistan. As of November, I think they had permitted one. So they're 999 short, at least.

Q: Frank Anderson, you talked a little bit about contractors. What role do you think companies like Blackwater, now Xe, will be playing in Afghanistan?

ANDERSON: I think one of our serious dysfunctions is that we have organized ourselves in such a way that what are essential state functions are now performed by businesses. I can't think of any way that it makes sense for a nation to justify having its embassy in Afghanistan — and all its embassies around the world — protected by businessmen. Rather than Marine security guards, when you approach the embassy in Kabul, you go through a layer of Afghan police — that's comforting — then a group, not Blackwater, but another American security company. Then you can turn right to be confronted by other contract guards who help protect the International Security in Afghanistan Force (ISAF) headquarters.

There's no way that we should have allowed ourselves to be deployed where we have to have businessmen performing essential state functions. And it's not just security; we have stopped doing the business of government. I don't know how many multiples it costs to have a government function performed by businessmen, but it's at least two or three.

Fixing this would require revolutionary change. We have, over the last 30 or 40 years, privatized function after function after function with the idea — once an ideological view from one political party — that business is essentially more efficient than government. As those around the room who've been in government and then in business will tell you, it just doesn't play out. Bureaucracy is inefficient. If you get 50 people in a business, it's going to become inefficient. It's not going to be more or less efficient than

50 people in the government. I suppose it makes sense to privatize the snow-plowing function in the city of Washington. I think it makes less sense to privatize the analysis of intelligence. I think it is obscene that you privatize the application of violence.

RIEDEL: I fully agree with everything Frank has said. The irony is, as we've outsourced all of these government functions, particularly in the intelligence community, we've just built a larger and larger intelligence bureaucracy with more and more layers of review, more and more people who are reading contracts every day and overseeing contractors, rather than doing their jobs. We now have more institutions in the intelligence community than we've ever had before. Look at the picture of the president meeting with his so-called intelligence advisers in the White House two days ago. How many people were in that room? Who's the sheriff? We've got a huge posse of bureaucrats. Who's in charge?

Q: In the larger picture of the U.S. relationship with the Muslim world, aren't we, in a way, becoming hostage to two smaller groups? Al-Qaeda does not represent even one thousand or half a thousand of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims. In the United States, we have a very strong group that really influences policy, that creates problems for us in the United States and other places. As policy makers, where is our national interest, and who is guarding it? Many questions arise in the Muslim streets when I go there as an American Muslim. They may accept me as a brother in faith sometimes, but they lash me as an American for our policies everywhere, from Nigeria to Sudan to other places. How can we get out of this mess and build relationships that will protect the vital interests of our society here without sacrificing our good relationship with the larger Muslim world?

ANDERSON: It is an ideological question whether or not terrorism should be addressed as a crime or a geopolitical military issue. It has been unpopular, though it's becoming less so, to recognize that it is a crime, and that you have to deal with terrorism the way you deal with murder, narcotics and bank fraud. In our judicial system, if you want to prove a crime, you have to prove motive, means and opportunity. If you want to prevent a crime, you need to figure out a way to attack motive, means and opportunity. We have elected to go to war, in at least one case, and, arguably, we've continued a war in another that has had very limited effect on the terrorists' means. We've done a pretty good job, and we've certainly invested a lot in reducing opportunity. Al-Qaeda and other terrorists are clever, and they've done a fine job, from their point of view, of overcoming barriers. But we are now a much more secure nation, and it's a much more secure world. It's tougher to be a terrorist now than it was before. We've reduced opportunity.

It's not soft, it's not surrendering to the enemy, to recognize that we have to address motivation. To the extent that terrorists are motivated to act against us by our policies, we have to question whether or not the policies are sufficiently important or are of such positive value to us that we ought not to adjust them. If they are, you must address the terrorist by attacking his means and reducing his opportunities.

The second President Bush made a good point: there are some people in the world who are angry at us because of what we do. There are others who hate us because of what we are. Regarding those who are angry with us because of what we do, we can

make a choice. Do we adopt policies that respond to their anger, or do we decide that our policies are important enough to us that we're going to persist in them and then deal with their anger through reducing means and opportunity?

A limited number of people — those associated with al-Qaeda and others — are not angry with us because of what we do, no matter what they say. They hate us because of what we are. It isn't that we're democratic; it's just that we're what we are. We're richer; we're more comfortable; we're more powerful; we're more loud and brash. Therefore, they want to kill us. Our only option with those people is to hunt them down and kill them. With everybody else, I think there are opportunities to improve our position: by addressing their motivation, by adjusting our policies; reducing their means by cutting down their ability to obtain financing, safe havens and personnel; and reducing their opportunities by improving security across our infrastructure and society.

MATTAIR: Bruce and Marc, can we take their arguments away from them? If we were to help a Palestinian state come into being, if we were to have a lighter military footprint in the Persian Gulf and an over-the-horizon capability, if we addressed the grievances they articulate, would that make a difference or not?

SAGEMAN: I think it would decrease the probability of terrorist acts. It's not going to take them away. There are always going to be malcontents, so don't think we're going to really put an end to terrorism. It's here to stay — not just this type of new jihadi terrorism, but also ecological terrorism. It was leftist terrorism 40 years ago. We're never going to live in a utopia where everybody's happy.

If the United States looks at the motivations and the dynamics that lie at the heart of the appeal of al-Qaeda in the Islamic world, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the sense of alienation over what happens in Palestine have always been one of al-Qaeda's strongest recruiting mechanisms.

It's also, in a sense, aggravated by what I call that first war, within Washington, where people milk this issue for naked political ambition. Being tough on crime happens to be very popular with voters. I agree with Frank; I view terrorism as crime, as well. But everybody's rushing to say, I'm tougher than my opponent on crime. So the domestic agenda will always drive the foreign agenda. If you have foreigners who stupidly listen to what we say, they're going to be upset. Our target audience is a domestic audience, and it's going to put us at a disadvantage abroad.

RIEDEL: Yes, it would make a great deal of difference. If the United States looks at the motivations and the dynamics that lie at the heart of the appeal of al-Qaeda in the Islamic world, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the sense of alienation over what happens in Palestine have always been one of al-Qaeda's strongest recruiting mechanisms. If you look at the lives of the leaders of al-Qaeda — Osama bin Laden and especially Ayman Zawahiri — it's always about the Arab-Israeli conflict. May I remind you of something, however?

Their end state — and here, I think we're in the same place, Frank, Marc and I — is not a just and lasting peace. Their end state is the elimination of Israel. We are never going to convince them, through our actions, to change. But we can affect the milieu in which they recruit and operate.

I suspect, in the next day or so, we are going to see a martyrdom videotape or a martyrdom video-will of some sort from Dr. Humam Belawi, the man who attacked us at Khost. I suspect that he will talk a lot about the Zionist crusader alliance and who he was fighting. We should not succumb to the argument that trying to take away these motives is somehow appeasing the enemy. The Arab-Israeli conflict has become a threat to the national security of the United States of America, and we must recognize it as a threat to the national security interests of the United States of America.

The president made a very good start in Cairo. But the devil is in the details. I think I can say with some authority that trying to get Israelis and Palestinians to agree on anything is a lot harder to do in the real world than it is in the think-tank world. But that doesn't diminish the absolute importance of the administration's pursuing this. Countering the narrative and ideology of al-Qaeda has to mean dealing with the issues that al-Qaeda itself says are the essence of its appeal. Talking about it is a good first step; following through is absolutely imperative.

MATTAIR: Yes, Bruce, I agree 100 percent with what you just said.

Q: Since three panelists have decades of experience with the CIA, what is your analysis of the recent bombing in Khost? What does it mean that we were taken in by a Jordanian double or triple agent? What does it mean that two of the people killed were current or former Blackwater employees?

RIEDEL: First of all, we don't know what happened yet. We have very scanty press reports. But let's assume it was some kind of triple or double or quadruple agent. To me, one of the most interesting things is, what was it that he was bringing to the table? As far as we can tell from the press accounts — and I stress, we only have press accounts; we don't really know what happened — he was bringing to the table some really big bait: the location of Ayman Zawahiri, specifics on where we would find high-value target number two. We haven't had that in eight years. That was huge bait.

I'm not going to comment about the wisdom of the tradecraft of the people involved here. I think they've paid the ultimate price for whatever mistakes they made. But I can understand that if that was, indeed, the bait, this was a big, big operation.

ANDERSON: Like Bruce, I only know what's been in the press. And I'm actually comforted that the leaks of past events have not been repeated. We don't know everybody who was killed. But the things that came out indicate that this was a double or triple operation, and, as Bruce said, accomplishing that is difficult. In a double-agent operation, you send someone pretending to be a source in to your enemy so that person can either act or learn enough for it to be in your interest, giving you more information than

you give up. But you've got to give up information. It's called feedstock. You have to give up intelligence.

This operative, if the press is to be believed, gave up a lot over time and developed confidence on the part of the CIA, or perhaps it was the Jordanian service that was handling him. There was a member of the Jordanian royal family who was tragically among the dead. I have to go along with Bruce. I can't question the tradecraft of people 10,000 miles away; I wasn't in the room. To some extent, it may be the case that inexperience played a role. I understand that the chief of base was on her first overseas assignment.

The agency is a far less experienced institution than previously. It grew very quickly. It grows quickly in times of war and contracts in times of peace. Every time it grows, it has growth pains. It has a lot of people doing what they're doing for the first time. I once had a boss scream that no one should be the chief of station for the first time. It could very well have been inexperience; it could very well have been mistakes.

I don't think it means much that the people who were killed were Blackwater. They should have been government employees; they weren't. What it means is that in this war, if we want to get targeting data on Zawahiri and someone's bringing us information that sacrifices — as it almost certainly did — other targets, we might fall for that one again.

SAGEMAN: I'm not a journalist and therefore, I don't usually comment on recent events. In my experience, as the investigation unfolds, all the hysteria often happens to be wrong. So let's not judge immediately what happened by calling it a double or triple agent or something like that. Let's look at the facts. This was a guy who had a reputation on the Internet, who was a very reluctant recruit of the Jordanians, who was sent, reluctantly, to the area in order to penetrate al-Qaeda. I don't think of him as a double agent so far. I think of him as a very reluctant recruit who probably fessed up to al-Qaeda when he actually met with them and they said, look, we can turn this around. He might have just been sent back. This could have been a failed operation from the start. I think simple explanations are always the best, even in the intelligence world. Let's not pre-judge this.

Q: My question regards strategic communication in Afghanistan. Peter Bergen talked about public-opinion polls and how the coalition still has pretty strong favorability. However, our popularity has decreased year after year as our words and actions haven't exactly matched. How important do you think strategic communication is overall in Afghanistan, and what you think we might be able to do better?

SAGEMAN: Strategic communication is always secondary or tertiary to bullets. If you kill a family member, I don't care how good your strategic communication is. It's about action and how you spin that action. In a sense, it can't really come from us. It has to come from local discussions by Afghans about what we have done or not done. On the positive side, we have not killed as many people as the Soviets did, about 1.2 to 1.5 million during their 10 years there. We have done far less damage. Therefore, in a sense, we're not at the low point that the Soviets were when they decided to do counterinsurgency in 1986. But this whole notion about strategic communication is always secondary to the

facts on the ground, especially the images on television. Right now in Afghanistan, television is a very competitive business and allows all kinds of rumors, plots and nonsense to be shown. They're going to trump whatever we're going to do. So it's a very hard task. I think it's almost impossible. The facts on the ground always trump whatever you say.

Q: When President Obama delivered his speech about a new strategy in Afghanistan, he said that the United States has a partnership with Pakistan and we will not abandon our partners. Some Afghan analysts fear that after 18 months, the situation of the '90s, when the Soviet Union left, will be repeated and Afghanistan will be left to the mercy of its neighbors. What do you think about that?

RIEDEL: If you look at what the president said at West Point and how he and his advisors have qualified that since then, mid-2011 is not the point at which 140,000 NATO soldiers magically disappear from Afghanistan and start coming home. It's the point at which we aspire to begin what I think will be a very slow, very small drawdown. Here, I think Marc and I disagree. I don't think the politics of this in the United States are going to force this administration to draw down substantially before 2012. One thing I think is certain: We will not have achieved lasting security change if that's the case. I think that, by mid-2011, we will have a pretty good idea of whether this McChrystal-Obama strategy has a chance of succeeding.

If, by the middle of 2011 — 12 months after we've gotten most of the force in theater; ramped up civilian advisers to 1,000 or so from 300 at the beginning of 2000; begun providing economic assistance; begun working regional diplomacy — we don't see any sign of change, then we've learned something. The patient was dead. President Obama inherited a dead patient on the table, and we cannot rebuild the Afghan state. If that's the case, we're in a very, very difficult situation. There's no simple, let's all come home and pretend it's not a problem. More will probably not be the answer. Staying on indefinitely will not be the answer. And quitting will not be the answer. One thing I can say for sure is, I hope President Obama doesn't ask me for another strategic review at that time.

SAGEMAN: Let me make a small technical comment. The Soviets withdrew in nine months, and they live next door to Afghanistan. That was a tremendous logistical feat on their part. You don't know the difficulty involved in withdrawing the 100,000 people that they had there. If you look at the logistics in Afghanistan for a large military, as opposed to insurgents, who actually can come across the border at will, you realize the problem. There are two major roads: one is to the north and the other is the Jalalabad-Peshawar highway through the Khyber Pass. Both of them are fairly precarious and can be interrupted at any point. You just need to hit the first car and the last car of the convoy and those guys get stuck; there are no side roads. So to think that we can withdraw rapidly is complete nonsense.

Q: Ever since Obama has come into office, and especially after his speech on December 1 about the troop surge, comparisons have been drawn with Vietnam. Though we heard

the comparison with the Soviet invasion, I was just wondering what all of your views were on Vietnam and whether the situations are even comparable.

SAGEMAN: In a sense, the war in Vietnam was fought within the Beltway. We withdrew because of domestic reasons and not so much what happened in Vietnam. The Soviets experienced the same thing. They did not lose a single major encounter to the Afghan mujahedeen while they were there for almost 10 years. In Vietnam, we didn't really lose any major encounter to the North Vietnamese or the Vietcong. This war will also be fought within Washington. That's why I say we are actually fighting two wars, and you have to look at both of them together.

ANDERSON: There's a very important distinction between Vietnam and Afghanistan: Vietnam was bipolar. The country was either in support of what had been the Republic of Vietnam and in alliance with the United States or it was in support of the legacy of Ho Chi Minh and what I think was a reluctant alliance with the Soviet bloc. They became united around an anti-colonial ideology. They were disciplined enough to take enormous losses; and in the end, they were able to put together a conventional force. We were never defeated by the Vietcong; we and our South Vietnamese allies were eventually overcome by a conventional force that drove tanks into Saigon.

Afghanistan is not bipolar. I don't know how many parties there are. I would argue that what's going to happen — and I might take issue with Marc on this — might depend as much on what happens in Afghanistan as it does on what happens in Washington. Afghans, in their multiplicity of institutions, associations and relationships, really want what almost everyone wants, and that is security and the opportunity to protect and grow one's family. We're in trouble in that in the south of the country right now, more security is provided in Taliban areas than in those that are friendly to the government. That's not the case throughout the rest of the country. The Afghan government, right now, is not the friend of most villagers in southern Afghanistan. If not the enemy, it's a force that has organized top-down corruption. Local officials pay for their positions and there's a flow of resources that are extracted from the people to corrupt politicians farther up the stream. That doesn't have to continue.

Hamid Karzai was a great hope. Everyone who knows him personally — I'm not in that category — respected him. He might change his mind. The pressures that led him to permit and maybe support this corrupt structure could be reversed over time. The people up and down that structure might change their minds. The parliament has stood up against his nominations. Peter pointed out the crucial importance of the Kabul-Kandahar road. It shouldn't be a military impossibility to secure that, and it would change the economic nature of southern Afghanistan.

RIEDEL: There's no question that the ghost of Vietnam haunts this administration. I can tell you, from being in it for 60 days, the ghost of what happened to Lyndon Johnson walks the corridors of this White House. It walks the corridors of this building every day. It's a mistake; we've got to get over it. We've got to stop fighting the Vietnam War. I

don't know whether we could or could not have won in Vietnam, but it is not relevant to Afghanistan. As Marc pointed out earlier, there is no superpower supporting the Taliban. There are no Stingers going to come to the Taliban. There's no Soviet Union and Communist China behind the Taliban.

Equally, Afghanistan is not Iraq. Let's not refight the surge arguments of 2007 and 2008 over Afghanistan. Gen. Petraeus is the first to say that the lessons of Iraq are not going to be applicable to Afghanistan. These are two fundamentally different countries. I know all of Asia looks like one big thing to Americans, but we've got to be a little bit more sophisticated. Yemen, Afghanistan, Iraq and Vietnam are not the same exact problem. As Frank very wisely told us at the beginning, we need expertise in the intimacy of the problem.

SAGEMAN: When I talk to real officials in Washington here, I'm always amazed by the sophistication of their understanding of the issue. That does not trickle down to the newspapers. That does not trickle down to MSNBC or FOX News. Unfortunately, people watch FOX News and MSNBC. You have this dichotomy of people who know better but can't really say much on TV, which is so polarized. I completely agree with Bruce. Afghanistan is not Vietnam; it's completely irrelevant to Vietnam. But the news media is making it so.

MATTAIR: Let me come back to a more general question. Bruce, you were quoted in the newspaper, in September, as saying that a successful counterinsurgency strategy required a partner who is viewed as legitimate. You have said moreover, that the Afghan government is illegitimate. Yet you were also quoted as saying that the administration should give McChrystal what he wanted. Can you explain why you think counterinsurgency is necessary, and why the more limited counterterrorist strategy of going after terrorist leaders with Special Forces and drones is not going to be sufficient?

RIEDEL: I'm not the only person who thinks a successful counterinsurgency requires a legitimate partner. I think that's the essence of the whole theory of counterinsurgency. That's certainly what Gen. Petraeus and Gen. McChrystal argue. I'll make it more specific: I think that the international community's handling of the Afghan presidential election was a major, major setback for us.

I'll go further. We acted, throughout the whole summer around this election, like a deer in the headlights. We could see a problem in front of us roaring down the highway. It slammed into us, and we seemed to just stand there. That is a major mistake, and it is not clear to me that we can recover from it. I think there is a possibility we'll recover from it, because I don't think we should vilify and demonize Hamid Karzai. His opportunity to work deals in Afghanistan is much more sophisticated than ours. His opportunity to reach out to his opponents is much more sophisticated than ours. He has some very, very good people in his cabinet. Fortunately, the parliament was smart enough to recognize those people and to put them back into office. But trying to get an effective Afghan partner is going to be very hard, and we have set ourselves back considerably by the handling of the Afghan presidential election.

The reason I don't think the so-called "counterterrorism-lite" strategy works is because I think it is based on a false premise: that Afghans and Pakistanis will give you the kind of critical human intelligence you need for the drones to work, when you don't provide them with any security or any incentive to work with you. My colleagues here have spent a lot more time running assets than I have, but I don't see how you're going to persuade someone to go out there and risk his life if the message you're sending him is, I'm not going to be here when you come back, but I'll leave you a cell phone; you call me with the targets. Counterterrorism-lite is a fantasy strategy. It is more akin to Tom Clancy novels than to reality on the battlefield.

Look at the Khost operation. I don't know exactly what the people in that forward operating base were doing, but I think you can surmise one thing: They were the eyes and ears of the human-intelligence collection program that was working to make the drones succeed. If you adopt the lite approach, you won't have forward operating bases. So where are you going to be meeting with your assets? Where are you going to be developing that human intelligence?

One last point: If we adopt the approach that we're in Afghanistan and Pakistan to play Whack-A-Mole with terrorists, why are the Afghan and the Pakistani governments going to say, come on in, we'd love to have you here? If you're doing nothing for me, it's all for you, that doesn't make any sense. By the way, our 44 partners in ISAF are going to go out the door very fast when you adopt this approach. Don't stand in the doorway, because you're going to get hit as they revolve through it.

Q: All of the panelists emphasized the question of democracy in Pakistan/Afghanistan. Do you realize the perspective from the other side: that all colonial powers were democratic governments; and the only so-called successful government in the Middle East is a colonial power, Israel? On the other hand, legitimacy, to them, does not flow from democracy, but from their tribal leadership and their ethnicity and religion. Hamid Karzai may be corrupt or he may be a saint; is not our association with him eroding his legitimacy in the eyes of the people, just as, in Pakistan, Zardari was elected by an overwhelming majority and now has a 19 percent approval rating? It is because of his allowing the drone attacks. So do we not have to go to the very basics — their institutions, their leadership — and maybe, ultimately, have to talk with Mullah Omar — or let them all be thrown from the top of the embassy?

RIEDEL: I'd just speak to the question of Pakistan. You're absolutely right. President Zardari's popularity, which was always based on an accident of matrimony, not on anything that had to do with Mr. 10 Percent himself, has fallen. I think we probably will see the end of the Zardari government in 2010. But we've tried the alternative of military dictatorship three times. Each time, we've ended up unhappy with the outcome, and the Pakistani people have ended up pretty unhappy with the outcome. We talked a lot about polling, and I'm as skeptical about polling in illiterate societies as anyone is. But there is interesting polling in Pakistan that says, despite the fact that the country now has an anemic economy and political violence is now at unprecedented levels, the

overwhelming majority of Pakistanis — something around 85 percent — say they do not want to have another military dictatorship.

Q: Given the composition of the panel, I can't resist asking for your assessment of the Amsterdam-to-Detroit incident. Most of us are sophisticated enough to know that success stories all have to be kept secret, and failures get magnified to a very great extent. Have we made substantial progress, in terms of the creation of structures, to prevent these kinds of incidents and in the restructuring after 9/11?

SAGEMAN: This is a very interesting question. Everything worked, but the system failed. That's because the system is no good. The father of Omar Faruk Abdulmatullah went to our embassy in Lagos and told us he was afraid his son was a terrorist. My understanding is that the folks in Lagos wrote cables back and said, this guy may be a terrorist. The guys back home said, okay, we're going to put him in our database, and we did. Everybody was doing the bureaucratic thing. But the system doesn't really work. It only works if you have inquisitive people back here going beyond just shuffling paper from one pile to another and saying, this is kind of interesting, let's see that. You don't have initiative. Everybody is basically doing CYA work. You do this, you do that and it's nobody's responsibility. I don't think the system works. I think we're going to see a re-evaluation of that system very soon, and trying to plug in this notion.

The model that may work is what the Israelis have been doing. They take young people, usually from universities — physicians, law students, medical students — and have them talk to all the passengers coming into Ben Gurion Airport. Those kids are young, they're 20, they're very curious. If a story doesn't make sense, they keep on asking questions. It's this sense of curiosity and saying, it doesn't really make sense. Those kids burn out very fast. They are usually let go after one or two years; they never stay for long. They're not professional people; they have an inquisitiveness to find out what's going on. That is what we're lacking. We just have bureaucrats working now in counterterrorism. Without this human factor, all this putting of data in large sets is not going to prevent the next terrorist act.

This, actually, was a very sophisticated act. I don't think a body scanner would have detected it. The amount of explosive that was sewn into the underwear was basically three packets of sugar, 80 grams, or three ounces. You probably would not even have discovered it if you patted down the person. Where he should have been stopped was at the initiative of his father. That should have been followed up. Maybe we should design a system where the person himself drives the system, so that if something like that is going on, you immediately check your database to see if he's in the United States, and if he's not, whether he has a visa. If he has a visa, you cancel it. If he wants to come here, that act drives the system to perhaps respond. But right now, I don't think the system works, even though everybody did his job.

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